



~ SIGNIFICANT SIRE SERIES ~

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF MIZRAHI

By Stephen Kinney

When asked to describe what was special about the late stallion Mizrahi, not one person interviewed for this article mentioned that he has reigned as the number one rated Morgan stallion on *Saddle Horse Report's* Sire Rating for nine consecutive years.

"It's that Isaac fluff," says longtime owner Sammi Hazzen of

PlayMor Farm ("Isaac" is Mizrahi's barn name, an ode to fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi).

It's the what?

"When we went to California to look at him, he took two steps out of the stall and his head went in the air, his tail went in the air, and he did that Isaac fluff. I was sold on the spot," Sammi says of

ABOVE: Top-ranked sire and World Champion Stallion Mizrahi. **INSET:** With Sammi Hazzen (photo © Howard Schatzberg)



Mizrahi (1) looks a lot like his sire, HVK Bell Flaire (2). (left photo © Ken Martin)

the January 2006 trip she took to purchase a breeding stallion for her family's farm back in Kentucky.

Bob Hughes says pretty much the same thing about his first impression when the stallion arrived in California in 2000. "When he got off the van, he stood up and looked around, he made you think he was the greatest horse there was. He just had this aura about him. He literally thought he was the greatest animal there was. He thought it and you believed it."

The mating that led to the birth of Mizrahi knotted together important threads of the Morgan show horse family from the late twentieth century. His sire, HVK Bell Flaire, was Noble Flaire's most acclaimed breeding son and the first Morgan to capture "triple crown" status, winning World Champion Stallion, Park Harness, and Park Saddle. Mizrahi's dam, Schiaparelli, BHOE, was not only a Park Saddle World Champion, she is also one of the most influential daughters of the great broodmare sire Wham Bam Command. Schiaparelli's dam, Townshend Donachime, is said by those who knew her to have possessed relentless, two-ended trotting ability, and she brought to the bloodline mix old New England greats like Orcland Vigildon, his parents Ulendon and Vigilda Burkland, as well as UVM Flash, Mansfield, Panfield, and Sealect.

Louise Shane, Mizrahi's breeder, was a connoisseur of special mares—she also owned Carillon Command, the dam of Stonecroft Masquerade. In 1999, trainer Rick Lane went searching, on behalf of Pete and Sandy Hendrick, for a stallion to show and to later take on breeding responsibilities at their Queens River Farm in Rhode

Island. They purchased the then three-year-old Mizrahi, and the team showed him to his first title, Grand Champion Stallion, at New England Regional.

The next season, the Hendricks moved Isaac to California where he joined others on the string of Morgans at Rock Walker Stables. Bob Hughes remembers working Isaac in harness. "He was a different kind of horse to work. With him, I learned there were things you might not have let some other horses get away with. You learned that you got way farther along by letting him think he was the one in control—most of the time he was. He came out every day throwing his tail over his back and snorting and blowing—every day! Once you got used to it, it was pretty easy. His get are similar. His son, [Merriehill] After Hours, was very much like him. As long as you let him think he was the greatest, then he was."

While in California, Mizrahi was shown lightly, winning the Junior Park Harness Championship as a four-year-old in 2000 at Morgan Medallion Regional, held in Santa Barbara. And he was Reserve World Champion Stallion in 2001.

It was in California that Mizrahi's breeding career got off to a start, under the new ownership of The Design Group. "It wasn't formal," Iann Fu Longenecker says of the formation of The Design Group. "In fact, it was very informal. Pete and Sandy [Hendrick] were out in California. We were all standing around talking, Rock and Bob, Pete and Sandy, our family, and Pete said, 'Why don't we all own a few horses together?' It was casual and fun." The Design Group would come to own not only Mizrahi, but also the stallion Bocelli



WORLD CHAMPION SONS

World champion sons who have produced world champion get include Graycliff Tony GCH (1), Mastroianni (2), Dragonsmeade Icon (3), Merriehill After Hours GCH (4), and Dressed Up GCH (5). (photos © Howard Schatzberg, Avis)

(Beethoven x Sioux's Hot Tamale) and Isaac's full sister, Donatella, who would later become a Broodmare Hall of Fame inductee.

Iann says, "Isaac was the kind of horse we all admired. He was beautiful, had so much masculine charisma. He reminded me of a masculine form of Schiaparelli. We all loved watching Glenn [Bouvier] and Schiaparelli. Isaac had that torque like his dam."

Iann confesses that there was an assumption the partners would always have Mizrahi and therefore breeding, at first, was light. But it was immediately successful.

In 2000, four Mizrahi foals were born at Queens River Farm. Of those four, it was the filly Queen's Victorian Lady (x Queen's Tiffany) that put the young sire on everyone's radar when she was crowned World Champion Mare as a two-year-old in 2002. Another of the four foaled in 2000, Queen's No Mercy (x Queen's Mercy Me), is a Broodmare Hall of Fame inductee and dam of Park Saddle World Champion Ledgefields Jagged Edge.

The Fu Family bred their foundation mare HVK Dragon Fly to Mizrahi, producing Dragonsmeade By Design, who remained treasured in their broodmare band. Later, Mizrahi would sire Dragonsmeade Icon (x HVK Obsidian, BHOF), another "triple crown" winner (World Champion Stallion, Park Saddle, and Pleasure Driving).

"Isaac was a horse we always thought we had together," Iann says. "We didn't use him that much because we never thought we'd sell him. We put a price on him from which we thought a buyer would walk away." The Design Group didn't account for the effect "that Isaac fluff" would have when circumstances brought Sammi Hazen shopping.

PlayMor Farm, newly established in Kentucky, declared their intention of being in the breeding business with the purchase of Liberation First Star in 2005. The Park Saddle World Champion



WORLD CHAMPION DAUGHTERS

Daughters with in-hand world titles include Queen's Victorian Lady (1), Dragonsmeade Balenciaga (2), Treble's She's Mizbehavin GCH (3), and Joan Rose (4). (photos © Howard Schatzberg, Shane Shifflet, Tami Johnson)

had previously been part of the epoch-defining stallion station at Rick Lane's Cabot Morgans. "We had moved to Kentucky in July of 2005," Sammi Hazen explains. "First Star hurt himself in September of that year and passed away in January of 2006. We had purchased the farm with the idea we would have a breeding stallion to bring income. We had to buy another stallion and I wanted one that was proven. I had a list of three. Isaac was at the top of that list."

The thing that initiated her interest was that filly from the first foal crop. Sammi recalls, "One of my all-time favorite mares was Queen's Victorian Lady. There was also Queen's Johnny Angel. I just liked those horses. I loved HVK Bell Flaire, and I had tried to purchase Schiaparelli for the Watsons when Born To Boogie was a youngster. So, Mizrahi was out of her, by Bell Flaire, and he was

already producing well. I loved the look of him. That's how I came to have him on my list."

The goal was to breed, but the Hazens had a long history of in-hand victory passes at Grand National. Thus, in 2006, Isaac made another trip to Oklahoma. Sammi says, "Our first thing was to make him World Champion Stallion. Jennifer [Hazen] had also qualified him in park saddle at the Kentucky State Fair. We won World Champion Stallion on the first day of Oklahoma. The qualifying park saddle class was only one night away. We got him out and got on him and we didn't show."

She says, Isaac "...was put on this earth to do one thing and he did it so well." He bred mares and sired champions in nearly all divisions, over-achieving breeding stallions, and prized broodmares.



BROODMARE HALL OF FAME (BHOF) CONNECTIONS

Mizrahi's BHOF connections include dam, Schiaparelli, BHOF (1); full-sister, Donatella, BHOF (with Dragonsmeade Varvatos) (2); daughter, Queen's No Mercy, BHOF (with Ledgefield Leonidas) (3); and Cache, BHOF (DBA Street Talk x Fleeting Heart) (4), the leading Broodmare Hall of Fame inductee.

Five of her nine world champions are sired by Mizrahi. (photos © Jon McCarthy, Howard Schatzberg, Stevie Bagdasarian, Doug Shiflet)

The term "kingmaker" is well-established in the Arabian breed where it is applied to the stallion Bay El Bey, whose three significant sons (Barbary, Huckleberry Bey, and Bey Shah) were also top siring stallions. In the Morgan breed, Mizrahi merits the same moniker: kingmaker. Five sons, themselves world champion, have, in turn, sired world champions. They include Dragonsmeade Icon (x HVK Obsidian, BHOF), sire of world-titled get such as RWF Dralion and Dragonsmeade Spectre; Graycliff Tony GCH (x Pompp And Pazazz, BHOF), sire of world-titled get such as Graycliff Tony Hawk GCH and Jake Ryan CH; Merriehill After Hours GCH (x Merriehill Dusk To Dawn, BHOF), sire of world-titled get such as Merriehill Justify CH and HVK Summer Night; Dressed Up GCH (x Unraveled), sire of world-titled get such as Word To The Wise and Tomeri Royal Attire; and Mastroianni (x Kim's Bellegante, BHOF), sire of world-titled get such as SLB Valedictorian GCH and SLB Chiara.

Daughters with in-hand world titles include Joan Rose (x Stonecroft Shalimar, BHOF); Dragonsmeade Balenciaga (x HVK Firefly); Treble's She's Mizbehavin GCH (x Treble's Pomp And Byzazz, BHOF); and, of course, the aforementioned Queen's Victorian Lady. "I think Isaac will be known as a broodmare sire," Iann Fu says. "In our breeding program this is proving strong."

Under the direction of Sammi and Jennifer Hazen, Mizrahi's breeding activity flourished. To date, he is the sire of 286 foals and more than 20 of those carry the family's PlayMor prefix. They include show ring greats like PlayMors Prinz Of Bellair GCH, PlayMor's Juke Box Hero GCH, PlayMor's Noble Aviator CH, and PlayMor's Here's Johnny GCH.

Mizrahi has earned his record-breaking run of nine consecutive years as *Saddle Horse Report's* number one ranked Morgan sire of show horses by siring champions in multiple disciplines. The get who have buoyed this rating include Western, hunter, and



VERSATILE GET WHO HAVE KEPT MIZRAHI AT THE TOP OF THE SIRE RATING

Examples of high-ranking Mizrahi get with diverse talents include: Detweiler's Mizteri Man (1) and Treble's Patent Pending GCH (2) (Western pleasure); TDM Excelsiora GCH (3) and The Fashionista GCH (4) (hunter pleasure); Acorn Ridge Dutch Design GCH (5) (classic pleasure driving); and Lexington Steel GCH (6) (saddle seat equitation). (photos © Howard Schatzberg, Shane Shiflet)

classic pleasure horses, and Morgans showing in harness, in-hand, and under saddle. Get like Western pleasure horses Treble's Patent Pending GCH and Faragamo GCH, hunter pleasure horses The Fashionista GCH and TDM Excelsiora GCH, and classic pleasure title-holders Lexington Steel GCH and Acorn Ridge Dutch Design GCH have racked up bounty for their sire.

Mizrahi has a unique connection with the Broodmare Hall of Fame. His dam, full-sister, and one daughter are all inductees. In addition, five of the nine world champions out of the all-time leading Hall of Fame mare Cache are sired by Mizrahi.

Everyone—*everyone*—agrees on the fact that the thing that makes his get special is the same thing that makes their sire special: Attitude.

"He passed on that attitude," Sammi says. "That presence. He had it and his get have it. They know they are something special. They rise to the occasion. He strengthened up the rear ends on a lot of horses," she adds. "He would generally put a foal's neck straight up and he would give them a hind end. Those were the things I feel you could count on him to do."

Bob Hughes is on the same page when he says, "He brings attitude...and he got that from his mother and his mother's mother. It all comes through from him. He was very smart, and he passed that on. His get are smart horses, and they are sensitive horses.

What I literally had to learn about him when I got him was to let him be what he wanted to be."

Ling Fu Wylie recalls another part of that attitude when her son, Mac, still a toddler, visited the stallion's stall, being sniffed up and down and greeted with kindness. "He gave refinement and spice to the breed, but they are sane and kind and smart." Ling adds, "...they have the roundness that Morgans have. There is never any doubt when you look at his get that they are Morgans."

Sammi's daughter, Jennifer, says, "I am honored I was part of his life's journey. I was always just along for the ride. He was so special, a standout, a showoff; he didn't need us there to do too much."

Given the legacy of his get and their prolific presence in the show ring, as well as his dominance of the breeding statistics for more than a decade, Mizrahi's name will always be remembered as one of the greats, a horse that defined his era and advanced the Morgan breed. When he was laid to rest in early March 2023, breeder Jay Kleiber said on Facebook, "Generations of descendants will forever keep him alive. 'Do not go to my grave and cry, I am not there. I did not die.'"

"I don't know if there'll ever be another," Sammi Hazen concludes. ■